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the most time discussing, is that they would rather continue with their filibuster of the Education Savings Account PLUS bill. That bill is bipartisan--in fact, three out of its four major provisions are Democratic proposals to improve education in America. The one proposal that many, though not all, Democrats oppose is a Coverdell proposal to expand the tax credit that American families can take to save for their children's educations. Democrats oppose that proposal because it will let families use those savings for their children's K-12 educational expenses as well as their college expenses. Even though the estimate is that most of the money will be used for expenses for children in public schools, and even though not one cent will be taken from the public schools, the teachers unions are upset because they fear that they may lose a little control because some low-income parents, who otherwise could not afford to send their children to private schools, will use this credit to get their children out of dangerous and failing public schools.

Democrats did not have enough votes to stop cloture on taking up the education bill. They therefore decided to conduct a "filibuster by amendment." Their hope was to delay proceedings long enough, or to get enough objectionable amendments adopted, that the Senate would either move on to other matters or vote against final passage. Frankly, our colleagues need to quit being so partisan. Democrats seem to feel compelled to filibuster virtually every piece of legislation that comes to the floor. They even conducted a filibuster against renaming National Airport after former President Reagan; that filibuster, to many of us, seemed an incredibly mean-spirited way to treat that great American, who has Alzheimer's Disease and is deteriorating rapidly.

If we had allowed the filibuster to go forward tempers would have flared. The mood in the Senate can and has become poisonous when partisan politics have run the debate. Therefore, the Majority Leader filed cloture on the bill and set it aside. That action moved negotiations off of the floor, where Senators from both sides might be tempted to grandstand, to calmer settings. The A-Plus Education Bill already has broad bipartisan support, but that does not mean that there may not be ways to attract even more support. Our hope is that an agreement may yet be reached on a fair way to proceed with the consideration of this bill. However, we are not going to go through a rancorous filibuster by amendment that in the end will not solve anything. We will be patient; we are not going to insist on an agreement in a day or two. However, if an agreement cannot be reached, those Democratic Senators who support A-Plus education savings accounts are eventually going to have to decide if they will support cloture or kill this bill.

Those opposing the motion to proceed contended:

Our votes against the motion to proceed should not be viewed as expressing opposition to the treaty. Instead, we are protesting the parliamentary situation. Democrats wish to offer many amendments to the pending education bill. Unfortunately, Republicans are not willing to entertain many amendments. They have asked Democrats to agree to considering either a single Democratic substitute or else just a few amendments. Democrats have refused, so Republicans have filed cloture and have set the bill aside until the cloture vote. If cloture is invoked, only germane amendments will be in order. During the time that the bill is being set aside, our Republican colleagues have brought up the NATO expansion treaty. In effect, they are using the debate on this measure for filler until they get their cloture vote. The debate on expanding NATO is much too serious a matter to be treated in this manner. A specific time for considering it should be set, and the Senate should have a lengthy debate. The Senate should certainly not be considering it just to kill time as part of a Republican effort to manipulate the Senate rules in order to prevent Democrats from offering amendments. Therefore, in protest, we oppose the motion to proceed.